

Yerba Buena Center

Existing Conditions

San Francisco Redevelopment Agency

July 15, 1965

DOCUMENTS DEPT.
SAN FRANCISCO
PUBLIC LIBRARY

D

REF
711.4097
Y442e

JUN - 8 2001

5/S



GOVERNMENT INFORMATION CENTER
SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY
CIVIC CENTER
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94102

SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY

REFERENCE BOOK

Not to be taken from the Library



CONTENTS

	Page
Introduction	1
Environmental Deficiencies	3
Extensive Deterioration	5
Health Problems	8
Fires	10
Police Problems	14
Conclusion	16
References	18

Introduction

Introduction

Eighty-seven acres of the central portion of the South of Market District are proposed for redevelopment as Yerba Buena Center. The need to redevelop this area can be attributed directly to existing conditions of decline, blight, and deterioration. These conditions and the related health, police, and fire problems are the subject of this report.

For years the South of Market District has been characterized by congested alleys, low rent production, inefficient buildings, vacancies, dirt, broken bottles, and decaying structures. In general, property owners have failed to maintain their properties. Residents have had neither the means

nor the initiative to press for community action to improve the area. Public expenditures for fire, health, and police service have been high and, due to the underdevelopment of the area, returns to the city from taxes have been low.

Five major problem areas demonstrate the presence of blight in the Yerba Buena Center area:

Environmental Deficiencies. Deficiencies in the environment are reflected in the identification of the area as San Francisco's skid row.

Extensive Structural Deterioration and Code Deficiencies. Field surveys and detailed interior inspections have revealed serious code deficiencies and deterioration in structures within Yerba Buena Center area.

Frequent Health Problems. Statistics provide evidence of the high incidence of health problems within the area.

High Incidence of Fires. Hazardous fire conditions result in many fires within the area, frequently in hotels.

Police Problems. Environmental conditions create an atmosphere conducive to crime.

Dirt, broken bottles,
and decaying structures
characterize the area.



Skid row hotels, many
of them unoccupied,
add to the unsavory
environment.

Obsolete and vacant
structures contribute
to decline.



Environmental Deficiencies

Environmental Deficiencies

Unsavory Reputation. The area within the Project boundaries has long had an unsavory reputation as San Francisco's skid row. The environment makes the area an uncomfortable place to work or live, discourages investment, and makes it difficult for businesses to retain women employees.

Obsolescent Structures. In the existing unhealthy environment property owners find it difficult to attract and hold tenants at rentals that produce a reasonable return on investment. The presence of a large number of uneconomic, functionally obsolescent, and otherwise undesirable



Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2014

<https://archive.org/details/yerbabuenacenter1519sanf>

structures contributes greatly to the high vacancy rate. In turn, the presence of vacancies contributes to further decline within the area and eventually adds to the unhealthy environment.

Congested and Unsafe Streets. The congested and inefficient pattern of narrow interior streets has also contributed to the area's decline. These narrow streets, congested with industrial traffic, blight residential structures fronting on them. Trucks unloading goods and material block the flow of traffic for extended periods of time. Children who use the same streets for play purposes are exposed to serious safety hazards.

Detrimental Land Uses. Certain land uses and conditions have a detrimental effect on the environment. A rendering plant within the area produces offensive odors. Dilapidated residential structures, skid row hotels, skid row bars, and the related problems of vandalism, alcoholism, and crime compound the blight and add to the area's unsavory reputation.

Lack of Community Facilities. The nearly complete lack of adequate playgrounds, recreational centers, and other community facilities necessary to support a residential population is a deficiency that contributes to the steady decline of the area as a suitable place for families to live.

Deteriorated walls are
potentially hazardous.



Substandard woodframe
buildings blight the
area.

Inspections reveal
seriously dilapidated
structures.

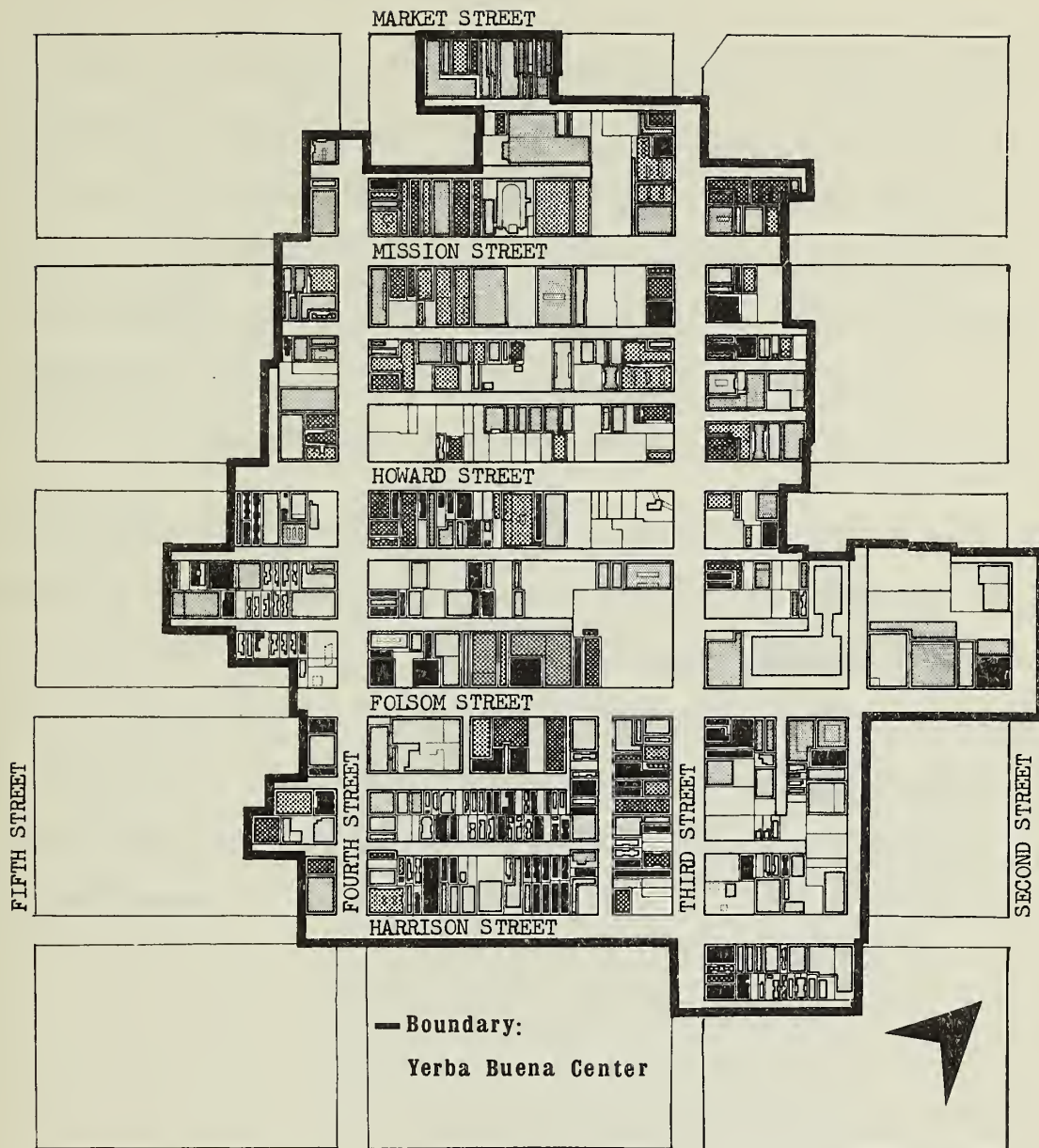


Extensive Deterioration

Extensive Deterioration

During the preparation of the Yerba Buena Center plan proposal, field surveys and detailed interior inspections were conducted to identify structures suffering from structural deterioration and code deficiencies. Out of a total of 404 buildings within the project area, 303 buildings were found to suffer from serious physical deficiencies. Of these 303 buildings, 240 were substandard to a degree where clearance is indicated. (1) The extent of physical deterioration is summarized on the Condition of Structures map.

Serious physical conditions encountered in many buildings included



Condition of Structures

Source:

**Urban Renewal Division,
Department of Public Works
1963**

Legend:

- 1 dilapidated
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5 standard
- vacant
- not evaluated

one or more of the following: settling and buckling in exterior walls and foundations; deterioration of walls, stairs, halls, and floors; deficiencies in entrances and exits; materials with inadequate fire resistance; combinations of deficiencies which result in serious fire or safety hazards; and construction types which indicate low resistance to earthquakes. Other structures were classified as seriously deficient due to the presence of a large number of minor deficiencies.

Fully 37 percent of the structures in the area, the majority of them family residential, are of woodframe construction and, therefore, clearly substandard to San Francisco's code. The code established protective "fire limit" zones for areas around San Francisco's downtown following the 1906 earthquake and fire. In these zones fireproof exterior walls are required for all new construction. The Project Area is located entirely within a "fire limit" zone.



Alcoholism is most prevalent among single individuals under 56 years of age.

Health Problems

Health Problems

A blighted area is typified by certain health problems and becomes increasingly blighted by the presence of these problems. There is a general high incidence of health problems in the Yerba Buena Center area. Specifically, there is evidence of three major health problems: Alcoholism, tuberculosis, and venereal disease.

A large number of elderly and near-elderly, many with limited incomes, are drawn to the area by the inexpensive living accommodations. A number of these have health problems. Of the single individuals, 46 percent are 56 years of age and over; of these 53 percent reported some illness. How-

ever, of the single individuals under 56 years of age, only 37 percent
(2)
reported some disorder.

The most frequently reported disorder was alcoholism, either alone or in concert with other health problems. It was listed by 35 percent of the single individuals who reported disorders when interviewed. Alcoholism is most prevalent among singles under 56 years of age and accounts for 47 percent of the disorders reported. Of those 56 years and over, only 25
(2)
percent reported alcoholism.

Although the residents of the Yerba Buena Center area constitute only one-half of one percent of San Francisco's population, the incidence of reported cases of tuberculosis and venereal disease was much greater in
(3)
the area in 1964, per 1,000 population, than in the City as a whole.

INCIDENCE OF DISEASE PER 1,000 POPULATION - 1964

	<u>San Francisco</u>	<u>Yerba Buena Center Area</u>
Tuberculosis	.67	5.53
Venereal Disease	7.70	23.64

Source: San Francisco Redevelopment Agency and
San Francisco Department of Public Health

Big Downtown Blaze

HOTEL FIRE -- 2 DIE

WEATHER
 San Francisco: Rain, 50° to 55°
 Bay Area: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Sacramento: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Stockton: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Modesto: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Fresno: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Bakersfield: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Los Angeles: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 San Diego: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Phoenix: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Dallas: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Houston: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 New York: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Chicago: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 London: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Paris: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Rome: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Moscow: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Tokyo: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Sydney: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Melbourne: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Auckland: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Wellington: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Christchurch: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Dunedin: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Invercargill: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Queenstown: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Milford Sound: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Fiordland: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Stewart Island: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Macquarie Island: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Phoenix Island: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Johnston Island: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Wake Island: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Midway Island: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Laysan Island: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Kauai Island: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Oahu Island: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Maui Island: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Hawaii Island: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Johnston Island: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Wake Island: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Midway Island: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Laysan Island: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Kauai Island: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Oahu Island: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Maui Island: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°
 Hawaii Island: Partly cloudy, 50° to 55°

AMERICA FIRST
San Francisco Examiner
 MONARCH OF THE DAILIES

FINAL

SUTTER 1-2424 EAST BAY 834-7340 SATURDAY, APRIL 11, 1964 3CP ★ Daily, 10c Sunday, 25c

40 Flee Third St. Hotel Fire Man Rescued From Ledge

Two men were burned to death, 40 routed from their rooms, and another had to be rescued from a ledge at the rear of the Nevada Hotel at 348 Third St. in a three-alarm fire early today.

Flames broke out in the second floor of the hotel, which runs through from Third Street to Ritch Street. First firemen on the scene found a man trapped on a ledge on the Ritch side of the building, and were able to get a ladder to him ahead of the flames, which were shooting up the rear of the two-story structure.

One of the victims was Mr. J. J. 72.

"I smelled smoke, and opened my door," said Milazzo, "and there was a wall of flames. I wrapped some wet towels around my face and dashed out. Mother of God! I never want to go through that again."



Burned bedding offers evidence of fire danger.

Over half of the fire responses were to hotel buildings.



Chet Born SFFD 1965

Fires

Fires

Hazardous fire conditions resulted in a high incidence of fires within the Yerba Buena Center area during 1964. Of 138 responses to calls in the area (4) by the San Francisco Fire Department 84 were to actual fires.

A large part of the Yerba Buena Center area is vacant (approximately 52 percent including streets; approximately 26 percent excluding streets). Nevertheless, there was a much greater incidence of actual fires and fire department responses per acre in Yerba Buena Center than in San Francisco as a whole.

INCIDENCE OF FIRES AND FIRE DEPARTMENT CALLS PER GROSS ACRE - 1964

	Number Per Acre	
	San Francisco	Yerba Buena Center Area
Fires	.26	.96
Fire Department Calls	.60	1.59

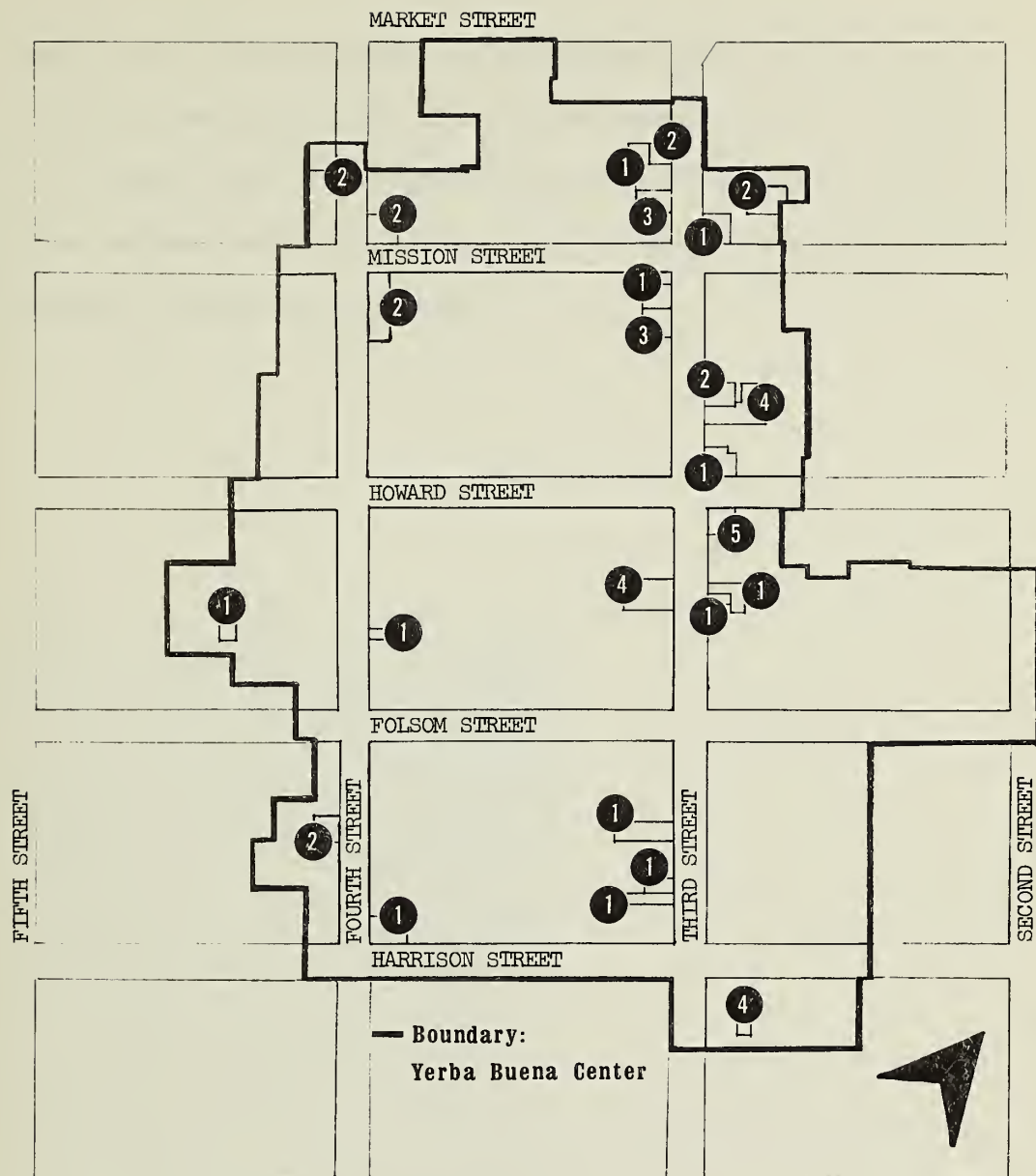
Source: San Francisco Redevelopment Agency and
San Francisco Fire Department

There were 49 fires in hotel buildings in Yerba Buena Center during 1964 (46 in 1963). Over 58 percent of the responses to fires in the area were to hotel buildings. Fires often recurred in the same hotel structure: 13 had at least two fires, six had at least three fires, four had at least four fires, and one had as many as five fires. The location and number of fires in hotel structures are recorded on the following map.

Smoking, which ignited bedding, couches, and other combustibles was the major cause of fires within the area and responsible for 66 percent of the fires in Yerba Buena Center area hotel structures.

In the Yerba Buena Center area there were three deaths from fire in 1964. These deaths occurred in hotel structures. During this period the fire death rate per 1,000 population was more than nine times greater in Yerba Buena Center than in San Francisco as a whole.

The high incidence of fires and Fire Department responses within the Yerba



Fires in Hotel Structures

**Location and Frequency
1964**

Legend	Total Fires
1 1 fire	49
2 2 fires	
3 3 fires	
4 4 fires	
5 5 fires	

Buena Center area is indicative of a disproportionate expenditure for fire prevention and control for the 87 acre area. Present conditions, conducive to fires, such as dilapidated hotels, deteriorated wood frame residences, and general carelessness, will continue to tax the services and resources of the Fire Department.

Drunk arrests constituted
a major portion of police
activity during 1964.



Police Problems

Police Problems

A further indication of the extent of blight in the area is the frequency of criminal activity.

Existing skid row uses such as disreputable bars, cheap hotels, substandard residential structures, and depressed economic and social conditions all contribute to an atmosphere conducive to crime.

Most of the Yerba Buena Center area is contained in four plots of the Southern Police District. (5) An examination of the figures on the incidence of crimes in these plots was the most direct method of collecting data relevant to the area.

Drunk arrests constituted a major portion of police activity in the area

during 1964. Within the four plots 4,431 arrests were made or approximately 998 per 1,000 population, over 30 times the city-wide figure of 32 arrests (6) per 1,000 population.

The incidence of all crimes, not only drunk arrests, is greater in the four plots per 1,000 population than in all of San Francisco. Robbery and grand larceny stand out among the major crimes in the area with over ten and 29 times as many crimes respectively per 1,000 population.

INCIDENCE OF CRIMES PER 1,000 POPULATION - 1964

	<u>San Francisco</u>	<u>Four Plots</u>
(7)		
<u>Drunkenness</u>	<u>32.24</u>	<u>998.66</u>
<u>Major Crimes</u>		
Manslaughter (negligent and non-negligent)	.17	.90
Rape	.27	1.58
Robbery	2.25	24.34
Aggravated Assault	2.19	16.45
Burglary	13.20	44.63
Grand Theft	2.04	61.53
Petty Theft	39.03	152.58
Auto Theft	9.48	39.64
Total	<u>68.63</u>	<u>341.65</u>
(8)		
<u>Minor Crimes</u>		
Total	<u>29.29</u>	<u>139.28</u>

Source: San Francisco Redevelopment Agency and
San Francisco Police Department

Conclusion

Conclusion

Whether by an examination of statistical data or by personal inspection, it is obvious that existing conditions within the Yerba Buena Center Redevelopment area are detrimental to the economic and social well-being of the community.

The area includes a chaotic combination of land uses characterized by conditions of blight which include residential, commercial and industrial buildings unfit and unsafe for occupancy; incompatible mixtures of commercial, industrial and residential uses; rapidly shifting uses; inadequate loading facilities; economic dislocation and stagnation; and a high incidence of fires, crimes, and health problems. These conditions contribute substantially to the problems of the area and necessitate disproportionate

expenditures for public health and safety, police protection and services, fire protection, and other public services.

The structural condition of many buildings tends to discourage an influx of business activity and the area continues to decline and stagnate. High vacancies and unhealthy sociological conditions contribute further to the continued depression of economic growth within the area. The city's taxpayers have been obligated to sustain the rising cost of providing services within the Yerba Buena Center Redevelopment area. The cost to the city is further increased because the area, as it is presently constituted, does not even approach its potential in tax revenues.

References

- (1) Source: San Francisco Redevelopment Agency and Urban Renewal Division, Department of Public Works, 1963.
- (2) Source: E. M. Schaffran and Company Relocation Survey Report - South of Market Redevelopment Project.
- (3) Source: San Francisco Department of Public Health.
- (4) Source of fire statistics: San Francisco Fire Department.
- (5) For administrative purposes the city is divided into nine police districts. Each district is then subdivided into smaller geographical units termed plots which form the working core of the districts. Yerba Buena Center, except for a small portion of Block 3763, falls within the four plots bounded by Market, Fifth, Harrison, and First Streets. Although these plots comprise a larger land area than Yerba Buena Center, the majority of the resident population is within the Project. Of the 4,437 residents in the four plots, 3,880 reside within the boundaries of the project. Therefore, the statistics on the incidence of crimes in these plots are representative of the significant police problems within the project.

- (6) The population of the four plots is derived from the U. S. Census of Housing for 1960 since 1964 population figures are not available. A comparison of the 1960 population and the 1964 incidence of crimes of the four plot area is reasonable as available evidence points to a decrease in population. Therefore, if anything, the use of 1960 population figures tends to understate the incidence of crime per 1,000 population. One indication of population change is a change in the number of residential structures or hotels. New residential structures and hotels are not in evidence. In fact, since 1960 some hotels have been closed and some residential structures have been demolished to be replaced by open parking lots or other non-residential uses.
- (7) Figures correspond to the number of arrests per 1,000 population. However, these incidents are normally reported as a result of on-view arrests and, therefore, the number of arrests approximates the number of cases.
- (8) Includes forgery and counterfeiting, worthless checks, embezzlement, receiving stolen property, weapons-carrying, etc. sex offenses (except rape and prostitution), offenses against family and children, malicious mischief, and other miscellaneous crimes and assaults.

